

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Lullabye for Julian

Joanna Zarkadas

*Rock-a-bye, Rock-a-bye
Rock-a-bye, Julian
Rock-a-bye, Rock-a-bye
Rock-a-bye, Julian
Rock-a-bye, Rock-a-bye
Rock-a-bye, Julian
Rock-a-bye, Julian boy*

I remember the first time
I sang that little song to you
It was the day we took you home
From the hospital
At three days old

I remember your birth mother
Heart-wrenchingly
Placing you in my arms
Sobbing her good-byes to you
And her thank yous to me
While I equally tearful
Sobbed my thank yous
And reassurances to her

I remember watching
As the guards
Solemnly wheeled her
From the hospital to the van
That would return her
To the prison where she lived
I remember the tears

Still streaming down my cheeks
As I buckled you into your car seat

I remember sitting with you
In the wooden rocking chair
That first day in your new home
Falling in love with you
As I began singing
Those words and a melody
I had never heard before
Grateful for the comfort
This unexpected gift from the universe
Offered us both

Many times, over the years
I sang that song to you
Sometimes several times a day
Till you could sing it with me
Together we sang it
To welcome your new baby brother
When we brought him home
From his foster care placement
At two months old

Years later I sang it to his daughter
My first grandchild
Then more years later
To her baby sister
Who now at two-and-a-half
Climbs into the rocking chair
And asks for it
As she rocks herself back and forth
“More,” she says, over and over
Once nine times in a row

No matter which name
I sing at the end of each line
It's you I think of

My first sweet baby
It is my love song to you
Telling you again and again
I am here for you
To shelter you
To comfort you
To light your way
I am yours
And you are mine
Forever

Rock-a-bye, Julian boy